

1861

L E T T E R

T O

DR. TOULMIN, M. D.

[PRICE EIGHTEEN PENCE.]

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DR. T. OULMIN, M. D.

PRICE EIGHTEEN PENCE

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Biddenden*

A
L E T T E R
T O
DR. TOULMIN, M. D.
RELATIVE TO HIS BOOK
ON THE
ANTIQUITY of the WORLD.

By RALPH SNEYD, LL. B.
RECTOR OF JEVINGTON, AND VICAR OF RYE,
IN SUSSEX, AND LATE FELLOW OF ALL SOULS
COLLEGE, OXFORD.

NEC AUDIENDUS IS QUI PHYSICUS APPELLATUR, QUI
OMNEM VIM DIVINAM IN NATURA SITAM ESSE CENSET,
QUÆ CAUSAS GIGNENDI, AUGENDI, MINUENDI HABEAT.

CICERO de Nat. De^m. Lib. i.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART THERE IS NO GOD.

PSALM xiv. Ver. 1.

L E W E S :

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MDCCLXXXIII.

DE TOLMIN, M.D.

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YTIUOITMA

in 1831, and that I have been
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

But when a writer is far from himself, and the respect due to the public, as to transgress the bounds of decorum and common sense, and to place his own speculative dreams in opposition to the gross manifest and incontrovertible

DR. TOULMIN.

When he no longer argues whether God should be worshipped in this or that particular form, but insists that the root of all religion whatever

NO man can be a greater friend to religious toleration and free inquiry after truth than myself, and when I find such investigations carried on with decency and moderation, I always read them with pleasure, whatever may be the author's opinion.

A

But

But when a writer so far forgets himself, and the respect due to the public, as to transgress the bounds of decorum and common sense, and to place his own speculative dreams in opposition to the most manifest and incontrovertible truths. ----

When he no longer argues whether God should be worshipped in this or that particular form, but strikes at the root of all religion whatever.-----

When he openly insults both the establishment of his country, and its adherents, in the grossest and most opprobrious terms an illiberal contempt of urbanity can dictate---I glory to acknowledge, that my indignation becomes fired : but when I see all this accompanied

ed with an over-bearing, ill-grounded self-sufficiency, and disgusting vanity, I then, only lament that the chastisement of such puerility should be solely intrusted to pedagogues and parents.

The Athenians, whom I dare say you will grant to have been as politically wise, and universally tolerant in religious matters as men, with any government, could well be, allowing the worship of (as some writers say) no less than thirty thousand different deities, yet no sooner did Protagoras begin a book with expressing only a doubt whether there was or was not any God *, than they publicly burnt it, and he himself was banished *urbe et agro*.

* De Divis neque ut sint, neque ut non sint habeo dicere.

CICERO de Nat. D. L. 1.

Nor was there any man amongst the Romans more free from superstition and bigotry, or a greater friend to free enquiry, than Cicero; yet he severely censured two Consuls, who (even for the immediate good of the state) embarked on an expedition "*contra auspicia*," and says, * "there was a submission due to religion, nor ought the establishment of a country to be contemptuously slighted." Yet to the utter disgrace of our police, those laws which are so well adapted to curb the licentiousness of impious and immoral writers, are suffered to sink into oblivion, while God and his religion are publicly held forth as objects of derision and contempt.

* *Parendum enim fuit religioni, nec patrius mos tam contumaciter repudiandus.* CICERO de Div. L. 2.

The rack and gibbet I acknowledge are as detrimental to the cause of religion, and disgraceful to a nation as uncorrected blasphemy: but I think the evil might be remedied without such instruments, either by enforcing the present laws, or by an establishment on the plan of an hospital, under the regulation of men of distinguished piety and learning, where, by proper discipline, a lowering diet, and well-directed course of study, rigorously enforced on all notoriously sceptical delinquents for a certain time, much mischief might be prevented which is now brought on society by the uncurbed licentiousness of the press, and the unbounded spirit of immorality and faction, which characterises our present unhappy age.

In the introduction * to your book, you acknowledge one of your chief objects is to overturn the established opinions and religion of the major part of the human species, and this without any attempt to give them another system in lieu of that you wish to deprive them of. Now, Sir! suppose this *generous*, this *humane* plan of your's should succeed to your wishes, let me ask what advantage you expect would result therefrom to your fellow creatures for whom you express some philanthropy? you must allow, bad as mankind is, many are still restrained from vice by the expectation of a future judgment; this barrier once broken down, what a deluge of every species of villainy would rush into socie-

* Page x.

ty! while the mild and amiable part of the present generation, must be rendered compleatly miserable, deprived of the comfortable expectation of reaping a blessed immortality in reward for a life spent conformably to precepts which they believed to be of divine origin--with no other resource, no other system to fly to--no light but the obscure glimmering reflected from the face of nature to guide their wandering and perplexed ideas to the discovery of truth, or the knowledge of good and evil.---They must fall the victims of despair, and sink under the oppressive burdens of life which are in themselves too grievous to be supported by the human mind, (rendered delicately sensible of injuries, and misfortunes, by refinement and cultivation,) if left solely to itself unassisted by reli-

gion: But you, so far from thinking this would be the case, insinuate that this book of your's, by overturning "** the*
" baneful and gloomy influence of the pre-
" sent barbarism and superstition," will have an excellent effect on the "*under-*
" standing and morals" of mankind. Now there is so little justice, or indeed common-sense in such an idea, as scarce entitles it to a serious reply.---Let me appeal to your daily observation, whether it is, the followers of, or scoffers at, our religion, its adherents, or deserters, whose "*understandings and mo-*
" rals seem banefully influenced †?"----
 No, Sir; I am fully convinced the Christian precepts, which form as complete and perfect a system of ethics,

* Page x. Introduction.

† Ibid.

as human reason is capable of conceiving, are fully adequate to spreading the most benign and happy influence over the minds and morals of mankind, their operation not being impeded by the intervention of vain, ambitious, and wicked men,

Nor are your reproaches against our religion as a bar to the pursuit of truth and knowledge more just or liberal; how inferior is and ever hath been, every other denomination of men compared to those of the Christian world---in the attainment of true knowledge---in the cultivation of the noble and exalted sciences, and all such truly philosophic investigations as have any tendency to the use or instruction of mankind; were we to run through the whole catalogue
from

from the most liberal science to the lowest art, and compare them in their present state, to that they arrived at under the influence of the much boasted civilization of Greece, or Rome, how manifestly would appear the present superiority; and how much more would the scale preponderate in our favour, if the comparison was drawn between the state of science in the Christian, and present cotemporary nations of any other religion.----In short, Sir, if you will learn to judge with the smallest degree of candor and impartiality, you will find the present established religion of Europe, so far from "*cramping* *" the investigation of knowledge, has the very contrary effect, and would instruct you in many things, of which at present

* Page ix. Introduction.

you

you seem totally ignorant, especially (that most useful of all) the knowledge of yourself, and the insufficiency of the human mind to investigate the mysterious works of providence.

You say "*Truth * can never injure mankind.*" This I acknowledge, because such truths as are not for our advantage, or necessary for us to know, are too deeply buried from the eye of reason ever to be revealed by human disquisition; consequently the most plausible speculations will never detrimentally affect those who are capable of distinguishing between truth and fallacy; but that there are truths, the knowledge of which would detrimentally affect the

* Page ix, Introduction.

peace of every individual, will admit of no controversy.

But I cannot express the eager impatience with which I looked forward for that blessed page of your enlightened book which was to redress the injury done the "*minds * and morals of mankind*" by what you called the "*out-cry of folly **"-----What resplendent, what exalted ideas of theology!---What a pure and sublime system of ethics!-----must this author be possessed of to be entitled to use such contemptuous! such opprobrious terms! against a religion which appeared replete with exalted ideas of God, and breathing universal charity in the sweetest accents :---What then was my surprize

* Page x. Introduction.

and

and disappointment, when I found this glorious revolution was to be effected by the stale exploded idea of attributing eternity to matter,---the disbelief of a creation, and consequently of a divine providence ! No sooner did I find the "*peace, * safety, and welfare of the human species*", was to be established on such a foundation, than I exclaimed in the words of Shakespear †, I'll
 ----- " trust not the Physician,
 " His antidotes are poison !"

You commence your work by contemptuously throwing to the right and left, as mere rubbish, all authorities on which the established opinions have been founded ; this alone was sufficient, with-

* Page xi. Introd.

† Timon of Athens.

out your previous advertisement, to convince me you was a young man, for a more experienced or rational system-builder would first have examined accurately, and satisfied himself and those he worked for, that the old foundations were totally ruinous and unsafe, before he ventured to neglect them, and begin entirely *de nova*; but you, inconsiderately, because there are some false accounts of the first ages, would fain draw a conclusion that there is no true one, and therefore our's to be rejected: But as you have express'd your contempt of the Mosiac history in general and diffuse terms, I am at a loss how to reply to unspecific charges, further than by expressing my astonishment how a person who met with any thing which shocked his reason in that book, could for a moment dwell
on

on the absurd annals of the eastern * nations which pretend to extend through a period of forty thousand, nay, the Chaldeans to four hundred thousand years, while these histories treat of showers of gold for three days successively---The sun not setting for ten days---The Nile overflowing with honey--and many the like wonders, especially as the Chinese do not themselves pretend to give the smallest share of credit to these very ancient records, and confess that the oldest writings they have in an intelligible

* Mr. Bryant, in his Mythology, has with much learning and judgement investigated these pretensions, and after observing an interval of 18,000 years between the first and second Emperor of China, says, "In this account we may, I think, perceive that the Chinese have acted like the people of Greece and other nations, and the histories, which were imported, they prefixed to the annals of their nations."—Vol. iii. p. 583.

cha-

character *, are not more than two thousand years old : The moderation of the Mosaic history in this point is to me a strong argument of its authenticity, when I consider the known emulation which has prevailed amongst the eastern nations for the right of seniority, and which naturally accounts for their extended histories, which were totally despised by the ancient Greek historians : Herodotus † speaking of the Egyptian pretensions on this head does not give them the least credit, but says “ he mentioned them because others had”. Nor have they been treated with more respect by the ablest, and most learned chronologists of the modern times. The candid and impartial Mr. Bryant ‡ speaking of

* Vid. Alciphron, or Minute Philosopher, vol. ii.

† In Euterpe, part. prior.

‡ Mythology, vol. iii. p. 367.

the Egyptian Dynasties, says, they "have
 " likewise afforded a handle to ill dis-
 " posed persons to arraign the credibi-
 " lity of the Mosaic history, and call
 " in question the authenticity of the
 " scriptures in general, it has been my
 " endeavour (he says) to detect their
 " fallacy, and shew manifestly they are
 " spurious ; and I hope the authorities
 " to which I appeal have sufficiently
 " proved it." And which he undoubt-
 " edly succeeds in.---

Sir Isaac * Newton also treats them
 with the same contempt, but I will not
 trouble you with his sentiments, as I
 do not suppose they would have any
 weight with one so blinded by self-suf-
 ficiency as to fancy himself one of the

* Chap. ii. of Chronol.

few, if not the only "*real philosopher**" that ever existed, while those that do or ever have maintained any other opinions than your own, are with a liberality, candour and urbanity, peculiar to yourself, distinguished as supporters of "*† hereditary folly, and vulgar prejudices---*" "*advocates for Gothic superstition and*" "*barbarism---perverters of the under-*" "*standings and morals of mankind-----*" "*supporters of ignorance and error,*" with many the like opprobrious terms which reflect an equal share of honor on your system, and yourself. Such in your exalted opinion, are those whom I have long considered as learned, liberal, and pious men, dedicating the fruits of unwearied study and matured experience to the investigation of truth, and propa-

* Page 8. † Passim,

gation

gation of moral virtues! Such too I am now assured, was Mr. Locke—Sir Isaac Newton—Mr. Boyle—Lord Bacon—all mere advocates for the “*turbulence*” * *of ignorance and error*,” all joining in “*the outcry † of folly*,” to drown the voice of reason and Doctor Toulmin.—

Oh Sir! instruct me I beseech you, what, or whom I am to thank, that I have existed in the same point of “*eternity*” with so enlightening a meteor, one of those “*inestimable ‡ few who endowed with superior abilities write in a rational and consistent manner, and whose clear discernment and sound understandings raises them above the or-*

* Page xi. Introduction.

† Page x. Introd.

‡ Page 183.

"*dinary level of mankind*:"—Had not your system left me at a loss where to address my grateful sense of such an advantage, I would here pour it forth.—Though, on second thoughts, I do not know if the present generation need plume itself on this occasion, or think itself singularly fortunate; for if all things are "*eternal* *" (as you suppose) all things are co-eternal, consequently your great great grandmother, and your great great grandson, are just as well off in this respect as I am.—If there is any error of mine in this idea, I hope you will attribute it to your not having been more explicit relative to the rational and corporeal particles of which we consist.—But this much I trust I may safely rely upon, that when these two essenti-

als of which I am composed lose their power of action, they will not only still “*exist **,” but may, perhaps, like your “*Derbyshire † Crocodile,*” or “*Welch Elephant,*” have their particles condensed and kept entire from the pollution of ignoble offices, till, in some of those boundless revolutions of events, their turn of animation again comes round, when under the form of an Elephant—a Stag—or some other noble creature, I may again be “*happy ‡ in my existence for a time,—for || elevating the mind to grant that there will be periods of time sufficiently extensive,*” and it cannot be denied, since our “*transmutations § are innumerable*” but all this may come to pass.—Yes, Sir!

* Page 57.

† Page 81.

‡ Page 57.

|| Page 136.

§ Page 177.

I perfectly agree with you in thinking that when mankind come to have a thorough knowledge and belief of these things, their "understandings and morals" must be wonderfully affected.—

I cannot divest myself of the idea, notwithstanding your boasted intrepidity, but you was fully aware of the detriment your system would receive, by clashing with that old-fashioned book the Bible, else why were you so assiduous, previous to your plunging into the dark abyss of Speculation, to fence off that obdurate rock with "*Gentoos* * or *Hindoos*," &c.? Original histories either are, or are not admissible in testimony of the world's age; if they are allowable, why not examine candidly their

* Page 28.

respective

respective claims? If they are not, why mention them at all? At least, why partially set them up to serve as caution posts to prevent your receiving detriment in running foul of the true one?

Nor does your book contain a more ridiculous absurdity (which is a bold assertion) than your having picked out in preference to all others, the strange, preposterous fable of Burmha*, than which, you say, no account of the creation "*carries with it more the face of probability* †," and which you are therefore pleased to relate as a parallel to others:—Surely, Sir, you could not be seriously in earnest, or else must have been ignorant of the further particulars respecting this extraordinary personage

* Page 31.

† Ibid.

and his family, of whom we have a full and particular account in the “ *History of Religious Ceremonies*,” when we are told there was originally a woman * named PARAXACTI, who had three sons, viz. BRUMA †, VIXNU, and RUTREM, who had eleven heads amongst them, (till Bruma lost one of his) and they all three married their mother: Bruma, also, under the form of a stag, in a most scandalous manner, married by force his own daughter, for which, through remorse of conscience, he absconded; but Vixnu and Rutrem, at the head of 30000000000 other gods,

* Vid. vol. iii. chap. 2. and 3. of Dissertation on the Gods of the East Indies.

† Whether Bruma, or Burmha, is the proper orthography, I leave to those who read the Vidam, or rather Shahstah, in the Sanscript language, to determine.

hunted

hunted him out, and Rutrem, with one stroke with his nails, cut off one of Bruma's heads, but was so sorry for it afterwards that he nearly went distracted: Bruma has been but slightly thought of ever since, (as indeed he well deserves with only four heads) and on that account there have been no more temples or statues erected in his honor.

Nor is the history of the other two brothers less curious; witness the story of Vixnu* and King Magapelixacravarti, with the morning star for his prime minister.---Also the account of Rutrem †, and King Dexaprojabadi, and the giant who knocked out the sun's teeth, and kicked the moon till it was all blotches

* History of Religious Ceremonies, vol. iii.

† Ibid.

and

and bruises; for which reason, to this day, the Indians offer to the sun nothing but butter, milk, pap, very ripe fruit, and such other things as require no mastication; and the Indians produce just as good a proof of the truth of these systems as you do of your's, by pointing to the moon and shewing the more opaque parts, as marks of the giant's foot.—Now, Sir, if you really do think this account of Bruma, &c. as rational as any other, I must beg leave to differ with you, for (not even your own excepted) I think it the wildest and most absurd I ever heard of.

But to return.—I perfectly agree with you, that all attempts to arrive at a knowledge of the creation's age from
mere

mere "*human tradition* *" must be vain. For, unassisted by divine aid, Moses could never have known what passed in many of the first days. I know there are in circulation various commonplace objections against the probability of the divine intervention; and the misfortune is, these are chiefly read by those who read nothing but what has a tendency to flatter their false security of escaping a future reckoning for their present conduct: However, (as I have before observed) your unspecific charges neither require, nor admit of, any reply. But I should have thought, a little acquaintance with the speculations of the Greek and Roman philosophers, would have been enough to prevent any man, not totally blinded by self-sufficiency,

* Page 17.

from

from expecting to arrive at truth on such subjects by the mere light of nature, or the penetration of his own unassisted reason.-----What perplexity and confusion!-----what a general surrounding darkness was displayed by the weak glimmering of the opposed lights of those * ancient philosophers; and how absurd it is in the present days to see a man prefer walking by the dim tapers of Epicurus, Democritus, or Straton, rather than guide his steps by the true light of heaven, when its resplendent rays are universally expanded.

* DEOS.—“ Nullos esse omninò Diagoras Melius, & Theodorus Cyrenaicus, putaverunt. Qui vero Deos esse dixerunt, tanta sunt in varietate, ac discentione ut eorum molestum sit dinumerare sententias.”

CICERO de Nat. Deor. Lib. i.

At

At the conclusion of your nineteenth section, you sum up what you have been labouring to demonstrate through the former part of your book, in these words * : “ *That as there never was any beginning, so will there never be a conclusion, to the existence of vegetables, animals, the world, the universe*”——and the next section finishes the whole by saying, “ *Yet † thus granting eternity to nature, and resting things upon their own foundation, WE have by no means been led to controvert the future being of the human species, nor the existence of infinite intelligence and wisdom.*”——Now, Sir! had you been secretary to King Magapelixacravarti, nay, had you been that great king himself, you could not have concluded a

* Page 192.

† Page 208.

royal edict more majestically in form :
 For after having in the most positive and
 arbitrary terms declared that nature is—
 hath been—and shall be for ever eternal,
 and is the sole producer of all that ex-
 ists—hath existed—or shall exist;—yet
 you have graciously condescended by the
 final clause of your mandate to declare,
 that “ WE” do still grant existence to
 God, to heaven, and to hell, any thing
 herein contained to the contrary not-
 withstanding.

Now, I think I cannot take a shorter
 method of exposing the absurd incon-
 sistency of such a system than by demon-
 strating the impossibility of an eternal
 self-existing universe—and an Infinite
 Intelligence and a future state being com-
 patible.—Let us then, for a moment,
 suppose

suppose the possibility of matter and Infinite Intelligence having co-eternal existences; they must then be either blended together, which would render all matter intelligent, or they must be distinct and independent of each other; and if so, to whom am I accountable for the use I make of my existence; or rather, who has any right to place me in a future state, if they did not place me in this.—Neither do I see how there can be any future in eternity, as there must be an end to the present before a future can be; and if the present can end, it is not eternity as you suppose it to be.—Nor do I understand what idea you can annex to Infinite Intelligence; for nature must either exist during the pleasure of Infinite Intelligence, and being thus subject to a termination, is not eternal,

eternal, or it exists independent and cannot be destroyed, and Infinite Intelligence then consequently becomes limited; so that neither a future state, nor Infinite Intelligence is consistent with your plan. And that matter can solely be eternal is impossible, as Mr. Locke * has clearly demonstrated; since bare Matter could neither of itself produce Motion or Intelligence, and man consists of Matter, Motion and Intelligence; therefore bare matter could never have produced man; and if matter could not produce limited Intelligence, how much more inadequate must it be to the production of Infinite Intelligence. Nor does Mr. Locke less fully confute the possibility of Intelligence and Matter being co-eternal; but the point is already,

* Chap. x. of Essay.

I trust,

I trust, rendered too clear, to make his reasoning on the subject necessary here; if you are not of this opinion may I beg of you to refer to the 18th and 19th sections of the 10th chapter of his Essay, where you will find in a firm and clear series of reasoning, truths, fix'd, and incontrovertable, plainly, and intelligently demonstrated, and which rising as it were above the earth, clash with your ariel castle founded solely on fancy, and hanging together only by the daub of a superficial varnish, which, unequal to the shock, is totally subverted, and falls to add an insignificant and neglected atom to the stupendous monuments of folly and speculation.

I understand, Sir! you are yet a very young man, let me exhort you (though not of Nestor's age myself) to leave this

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spe-

speculative path you are set out in, you are but wasting that time which, if applied to the study of Hippocrates and Galen, will render you of more service to your fellow creatures than ever you can be by amusing them with theories.—If you have adopted this as the road to fame and distinction, I doubt not you will soon find your error, as Apollo crowns no such votaries, unless indeed they aspire only to such a wreath as is worn by the far famed *Æsculapius* of the Pall-mall temple.—Nor is there so beaten, or so easy a track to walk in. I could devise twenty systems which should wear just as plausible a face as yours, and be equally supportable by the appearances of natural objects; as a specimen, I will in a summery way give you one on your own plan; and that I may do it the more briefly, let us suppose

suppose that I have already commenced my work by expressing a thorough contempt for the established religion;—that I have severely censured it for throwing such a damp on speculation—that I have insulted it, by ranging yours, or any other absurd system as a parallel to it—that I have branded all its supporters in the gross as a parcel of fools, Goths, barbarians, and, in short, called them all the names you do; having by this time pretty well lowered the reputed sages in my reader's mind, I proceed next to give him a very different idea of myself, and assure him "*the real* "*philosopher*" minds no body's opinion but his own,—acts so, and so, that is, just as I do myself.—Well, Sir! I shall now have tried sufficiently what his stomach will bear, and if I have not already

sickened him, I may safely venture on the introduction of my plan, which shall be this. (I will not fancy the world eternal, because you have chosen that idea before me, but) I will suppose there has been a period when all the creatures on the habitable globe, animal and vegetable, were in a state of perfect equality, and so continued for many ages, till man by learning to * read and write, got so much the ascendancy and superiority over the rest of the universe, that he not only usurped an absolute sovereignty, but swayed so tyrannic a sceptre that the very existencies of all other things became burthenome to them, so away they all went and shifted for themselves as well as they could; those that could swim took to the water, those

* Vide p. 15 of your own book.

that

that could fly to the air, the swift fled; others hid themselves in woods and thickets, from whence numbers were dragged to perpetual slavery and bondage; while those that had not time to shift for themselves better crept into holes and buried themselves, which was chiefly the case with fishes and * vegetables (whom we all know are slow travellers by land) particularly the poor shell fish; they one and all, at least such as were much inland, took to the ground, where they now form most † stupendous masses—Nor was all this scene of misery and distress sufficient to allay the “Gothic” fury of mankind, for no

* Manichee System.—“Herbas enim atque arbores
“sic putant vivere ut vitam quæ illis inest sentire cre-
“dant, & dolere cum læduntur.”

St. AUGUSTINE, de Hæres. cap. xlvii.

† M. de REAUMUR.

C 3

sooner

*Bishop Watson has written in defence
of this manichee system of Vegetable sen-
sibility -*

sooner did they discover the hiding places of these poor fugitives, than (bent only on destruction) they set fire to the subterraneous retreats, many of which still burn with unremitting fury ; nay, we may, in the vicinity of these fires, distinctly hear the deep groans of the afflicted creatures, and are frequently sensible of their tremors, which the “ Gothic and superstitious barbarism, and “ prevailing outcry of the present folly” terms volcanos, and earthquakes ; but this generation hath hitherto been totally ignorant of the causes which produced such phenomenons.

Now could I not bring every appearance of nature to support my theory with just as much force and propriety, as you have done for the support of yours?—

Yes,

Yes, Sir! not only your own reasoning but your very words would apply with little variation as well in the one case as in the other, for instance, let us turn to your 35th page,—“ *How singular then must all this appear to men whose ideas are cramped by the fetters of superstition, who have been taught from their infancy to believe, that*”—they have a legal right to lord it over the rest of the creation.—“ *No * sooner indeed are they told*”—they have no right that of conquest obtained by scholarship “ *than instantly they revolt at the idea, and placing confidence in the dreams of their ignorant predecessors, are insensible to the voice of reason and the plainest operations of nature, and it is † echoed by the barbarous nations, who trium-*

* Page 36.

† Page 37.

" pbed over the more refined civilization
 " of Greece and Rome" only by violence;
 that they rule the rest of the universe by
 power derived from God; " indeed so
 " clear are they about these fundamental
 " points, that they" will even shew you
 the written charter of their right, " and
 " are perfectly acquainted with the very
 " year and day of its origin."

* " It is a prevailing love of self which
 " has separated man at so great a distance
 " from the beautiful works of nature,
 " which has raised him in imagination to
 " a high and lofty station in the scale of
 " existence. Ask any one of the undis-
 " tinguished mass of people how things
 " came into existence, and he will tell you
 " they were created, and for our parti-

"cular use and accommodation; in short,
 "the whole magnificent scene of things is
 "daily and confidently asserted to be ulti-
 "mately intended for the use and conve-
 "nience of mankind; thus do the bulk of
 "the human species elevate themselves a-
 "bove the innumerable existencies which
 "surround them."

But * "elevating the mind sufficiently
 "to conceive" a once perfect equality,
 "granting" all I have supposed, "and
 "it cannot be denied, but that such causes
 "are amply sufficient to produce the ef-
 "fects, however uncommon, that have
 "hitherto, or shall hereafter command
 "our attention. They account very sa-
 "tisfactorily for the appearances of shells,
 "of sea-fish, of coral, &c. constituting

*“ the summits and bottoms of the highest
 “ mountains, and other vast portions of
 “ the habitable globe.”* Thus, Sir, I
 hope you are satisfied I could run on
 through your whole book, and *muta-
 tis mutandis*, apply your words to my
 system with equal propriety: Yet should
 I endeavour to elevate myself above *“ the
 “ undistinguished mass of people”* by a
 production of this nature, I dare say
 some Gothic superstitious barbarian would
 be so prejudiced to prevailing folly as to
 laugh at me, nay, perhaps if he had lei-
 sure, would start some plausible objec-
 tions to it: Yet, that would by no means
 prove it a worse system than yours, which
 is far from unexceptionable, even when
 tried by the very evidences you have pro-
 duced in its favor; as I will endeavour
 to demonstrate, if you will give me your
 attention

attention for a few minutes longer. I will turn to your 18th section*, where you say you have made it appear “*decisively, 1st, That not one single substance in nature is either permanent or primary.*” If by permanent you mean eternal, I grant it; but all metals are, in the vulgar sense, permanent, for however their particles may become mixed, or corroded, they may, by the operation of fire be restored to their characteristic appearances;—and I should think that those elements, or *ne plus ultra*, which Chymists arrive at in the final process of their analysis, might, with propriety, be term’d primary,—2d, You say, “*That animals, vegetables, the earth, the stones, the minerals, alike take their origin in the gradual progress of time, and in its*

“ *unceasing succession, are alike exposed to
 “ innumerable transmutations;”* — As you
 have not even attempted to demonstrate
 any primary cause in nature, you must
 give me leave to refer the “ *origin*” of
 animals, &c. &c. to An All Wise Cre-
 ator, that they do successively rise in the
 gradual progress of time is manifest, but
 its unceasing succession hath not been
 demonstrated; and as to their transmu-
 tation they are strictly limited; and that
 minerals do, for the greatest known ex-
 tent of time, reserve both their station
 and qualities I beg to refer you to Mr.
 Bryant’s Ancient Mythology, where he
 says, * the etymology of their names

“ *“ All Mineral and Medical Waters will be found;
 “ in a great degree, to retain their ancient Names, and
 “ amongst these may be observed a resemblance in most
 “ parts of the world.”* — Vol. i. p. 213.

proves

proves their antiquity.—3d and 4th, You say, “*that the globe itself from a multitude of causes is subject to the most slow but interesting revolutions, and that it undergoes incredible changes from heat, cold, volcanos, and earthquakes.*” It has not been made appear but what these alterations are very immaterial, and too trivial and local to be considered by “*the real philosopher,*” as either interesting or incredible, since the greatest mountain ever raised, by a volcano makes no more alteration on the face of the globe, than a worm-cast on a plain of a thousand acres; nor does the late dreadful catastrophe which has befallen one corner of Sicily, more materially affect the general appearance of the globe.—5thly, “*That vast alterations are perpetually made by the decay, generation, petre-*
faction,

*"faction, and other transmutations of
 "vegetables and animals."* There is no-
 thing exceptionable here but the word
"vast;" nor is it at any time a proper
 word, except in the mouths of the
"undistinguished mass of people;" it is
 much beneath the dignity of you *"real
 "philosophers"* to consider, and still more
 so to call any thing (your own compre-
 hensions excepted) *"vast,"* all must ap-
 pear to you as natural, easy, and fami-
 liar, and be treated of accordingly. Mr.
 Creech has enlarged on the sense of Lu-
 cretius, where he upbraids the vulgars
 who gaped at *Ætna* as a vast wonder,
 and says, *

"Thus he who views a River, Man, or Tree,
 "Or else what every Thing he chance to see,
 "Straight thinks them great; because perhaps he knows
 "No larger Streams, no greater Things than those."

* Book the vith.

6thly,

6thly, "That the sea is continually
 " altering the face of the earth, and that
 " in the eternal lapse of time it alternate-
 " ly encroaches upon, and retreats from
 " the dry land, diminishing or enlarging
 " the habitable world." * Thus, Sir! (for
 I with difficulty preserve that *vultum se-*
verum with which Horace * says *seria*
verba, ought to be delivered, and also
 hate a far-fetched argument when a fa-
 miliar illustration is at hand,) may the
 human face receive some trivial alterati-
 ons by a gentleman's wig getting a little
 matter to the right or left, or backwards
 or forwards; but these alterations will
 perhaps require much attention to be
 discerned, and make no kind of diffe-
 rence in the dimensions of the face; for
 whatever is lost from the right cheek



* De Arte Poet. lin. 106.

will be found, * gained in adequate proportion by the left, and so *vice versa*; and though in the course of the day fifty little variations may take place, perhaps at night the said tegument may be found exactly in the very position it was at first setting out in the morning: nor can I ever “*elevate my mind*” sufficiently to imagine the sea either has, or ever will forsake its present profound abyss to cover the summits of the Alps, and Pyrenees, which, according to your ideas, it must necessarily have done;—for wherever you have traced vestiges of marine production, there you suppose the sea to have had its natural abode: and once more let me request of you, not to talk of the

* Thus, when the sea (in February last) overflowed the Sicilian shores, it retired from that of Calabria.

“*eter-*

" *eternal lapse of time*" till you have demonstrated it.

7thly, " *That gradual but obvious influences occasion those numerous yet partial inundations, that have been found to make such deep and lasting impressions that have existed in every country, and every where left behind them the most visible marks of ruin and devastation.*" You here endeavour to intrude on us three points, you have not even attempted to demonstrate; that inundations may sometimes be gradual—proceed from obvious influences—or be partial—I readily grant; but that they have been always so, you have not so much as endeavoured to prove, nor is it possible to demonstrate or make "*obvious the influences*" which cause the extra-

D

ordinary

ordinary influxes of the ocean, which alone produce memorable inundations; and it is wonderful to me, that a person “ *who * has been accustomed to examine nature with an attentive and penetrating eye,*” and has every where traced vestiges of an universal deluge, should rather follow a whimsical fancy of his own, and maintain it has taken place gradually, than rely on an Historian whose account is justified by after appearances, which appearances he probably had never the opportunity of observing, though he recorded the event that produced them.

Nor are your final conclusions by any means deducible from what you have advanced.—

* Page 14.

“ *That*

* “ *That there ever has been a succession of events somewhat similar to what is continually observed.*”

It does not strike me but what every appearance you have mentioned might have been produced during a space of 6000, as well as 600,000 years: For in regard to the progressive formation of stones, earths, &c. the periods requisite to produce the appearances, must be proportioned by the causes which operate; now that the causes operate uniformly is not true, but that they vary in a very great degree is plainly demonstrable, for which reason the story you tell us about the † Grand Seignor—the Emperor of Germany—and Trajan’s Piles, throws no more light on the sub-

* Page 191.

† Page 102.

ject than a Gentoo Ode, or Chevy Chase, would have done ; for the degree of petrification which the Danube had been 1500 years in producing, would have been effected in almost the like number of days by many well known * springs here in England.—

“ That nature must through endless periods of duration have acted by laws fixed and immutable.”

Who this notable lady Nature is, I am totally unacquainted ; but whether your idea of her corresponds with that of Aristotle, Epicurus, or Straton ; or you fancy her to be the *αιθεριον σωμα* of Heraclitus, or the *θερμος* of Hippocrates, I

* There is a spring at Knaresborough, in Yorkshire, which petrifies with wonderful rapidity.

cannot

cannot conceive who had any right to give her laws; as you certainly seem to annex a very different idea to the term to what either Seneca, or Mr. Boyle does.

*“ That the human species have had,
“ and will have, an uniform and eternal
“ existence.”*

This by no means appears by any thing that you have advanced; on the contrary whence proceeds it if the world has been uniformly and eternally inhabited, with little or no variation from its present degree of * population, we do not † find some vestiges of human arts entombed amongst the remains of animals and vegetables: No brazen, iron, or agate arms or instruments, no pitchers, or other u-

* Page 90.

† Minute Philosopher.

tenfils? Whence proceeds it, that in these fucceffive strata of earths which you fuppofe to have been formerly the fcenes of life and vegetation, we find no remains of buildings, no foundations, no hewn ftones, or ftatues, not a fingle veltige of human arts or habitations except what our histories direct us where to fearch for; and tell us how they were buried? Now, Sir! confidering how open you laid the field before you began, and that you had no one check or hindrance to your imagination, you have by no means laid your plan fo well as you might have done, thus to leave it open to fuch material objections.—I may be prejudiced, but really think the plan I marked out is the better of the two, and would admit of fewer cavils than your's will.—

I fhall

I shall now hasten to take my leave of you, which I cannot do without remarking that you appear manifestly to have been led away thro' the whole of your book, by your avowed, but mistaken idea, that “ * *mankind frequently pay the greater deference to others in proportion as they propagate absurdities, and thank those that take pains to blind and confuse them.* ”—But I assure you, “ *it is* ” not “ *seriously † thought, that deceiving mankind is the real interest of society.* ” Men may affect singularity in hopes of attracting notice ; or from a vain desire of appearing ‡ “ *raised by a superior clearness of discernment and soundness of understanding above the ordinary level of mankind.* ” But unless their abilities in some measure keep pace with their ambition, they had better remain

* Page 185.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 183.

amongst the undistinguished mass, as
*" they * only expose themselves to the cen-
 " sure of the greatest part of the world."*

But, however, as public notice is frequently all that is aspired after, and some people had rather receive censure

*" than † fancy themselves injured or neg-
 " lected by having their respective opini-
 " ons passed over in silence,"* I suppose

you will consider this address as a compliment, which, however, I ingenuously acknowledge I should not have paid you, had I not seen your name mentioned in the Advertisement of a late publication ‡, and ranked amongst the most distinguished sceptics this prolific coun-

* Page 183.

† Page 11.

‡ Dr. Ogilvie's Enquiry into the Scepticism of the Times:—With Occasional Observations on the Writings of Herbert, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, Toulmin, &c.

try has produced;—I was curious to see what claim you had to so enviable an honor, and accordingly again took your book in hand, and read it through, and its ample margin invited those notes which have occasioned this public notice being taken of it: To which I have been instigated by a desire to convince you, that abusive terms, gross invectives, and bold assertions, are not considered as arguments in any cause; and that the former are highly disgusting, when indiscriminately thrown out by a simple individual against a body aggregate, and more particularly so in the instance of your late Publication, where, with the fastidious *hauteur* of self-sufficiency, and the insulting air of confidence peculiar to puerility, you load with undeserved calumny, a body, no less respectable for
the

the number of its members, than distinguished by their learning, and cultivation of moral virtues.—

I have also a desire to assure you, that the holy writ hath not stood its ground, through such a long succession of ages, against the attacks of so many writers, highly celebrated for their genius and wit, to be subverted by a chimerical dream,—or a vague self-contradicting theory.—

Moreover, that of all the claimants for diplomatic distinction, none are less entitled to it than those numberless writers, who, for these last ten years have so infested the bye paths of literature with their crude dreams, delivered to the public under the polluted titles of rational

tional theories,—free enquiries—natural systems—and the like; and as singularity is the very essence of such productions, it is amusing to observe the various ways and means which are pursued to effect it. —But of late theories have so greatly multiplied, the path of speculation hath been so beaten, that it is become difficult not to tread in the steps of others; to remedy which disadvantage, the writers of the present days have substituted in lieu of originality an unjustifiable boldness in their assertions,—an open defiance of laws human and divine,—and an avowed contempt of the * censures of the rational part of society,—and to the disgrace of the age, if a man can but carry these points to a degree sufficiently *outré*, he is certain of obtaining a con-

siderable share of public notice, and probably will be well paid for his trouble.

Whether your endeavours to surpass in these points proceed from the hopes of receiving that “ * *distinguished lustre*” which you say is reflected from the censures of good Christians, I pretend not to determine, though it is undoubtedly a reward, (if such you can consider their censures) to which your labors have very fully entitled you.—But in regard to the originality of your system, you have nothing to claim on that score; a circumstance of which you do not yourself † seem sensible: It was the doctrine of *Heraclitus*, “ *That the world had no beginning in respect to time.*” ε καλα χρονον ειναι γενησεν τον Κοσμον. But that

* Page 7.

† Page 179.

there

there is a “ *mind, or soul, which ex-*
pands itself through all things,” λογον
 τον δια της υσιας τε παντος διηκουσα, which
 he says is fire, and has the power of pro-
 ducing, and destroying (or rather alter-
 ing the form of) all things; and that
 nature is no where at rest, but in a con-
 tinual fluctuation of formation and de-
 cay.—In Cicero, *De Naturâ Deorum*,
 we find a number of philosophic sects,
 who maintained doctrines somewhat si-
 milar to that of *Heracitus*: And the pre-
 sent age inferior to none in the number
 and diversity of its theories has produced
 a multiplicity of books, which, like
 your own, have endeavoured to attribute
 a more remote * antiquity to the exist-
 ence

* This has frequently been attempted from the ap-
 pearances of volcanos;—the state and situation of their
 lava,

ence of the universe, than they have been able to demonstrate by reason or argument. Possibility is the utmost the most plausible of these theories will admit of, and they are consequently (exclusive of their being inconsistent with the more rational and sublime account of the creation given us by the inspired Historian) totally inadequate to convey conviction, even to the minds of those who seem so desirous of misbelieving what they cannot help fearing to be true: And I sincerely hope, the time may yet come, when you, Sir, will no longer consider a religion which makes

lava, and the periods apparently requisite for their producing vegetation. The futility of these attempts are fully demonstrated by Sir William Hamilton's Remarks on the Soil of Naples, published in the Philos. Transactions, Vol. lxi. p. 7.—See also Dr. Watson's Letters to Mr. Gibbon, p. 263, & sequen.

happiness

happiness the reward of virtue, and misery the punishment of vice,—whose theology is pure and exalted,—whose precepts are mild and rational,—and whose practice is universal charity and benevolence, has any tendency to “ *spread a gloomy influence over the minds or conduct of mankind,*” further than by planting an internal monitor in their bosoms, which renders mental tranquillity incompatible with a vicious life.

I am, Sir,

With all due respect,

Your well-wisher, &c.

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